United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1095
9 March 1992

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General pays tribute to former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who died this morning in Tel Aviv, saying he played "important role" in events leading to 1979 Treaty between Egypt and Israel, and signing of Camp David in 1978.

+ Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq and other Government officials to meet with President of Security Council tomorrow; in related development, France, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom and United States say Iraq has not yet provided information about Kuwaitis and third country nationals detained in Iraq.

+ Under-Secretary-General James O.C. Jonah briefs correspondents on his proposal to send unarmed force of some 40 United Nations observers to Mogadiscio, Somalia, to monitor cease-fire agreement signed on 3 March.

+ Force Commander of United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia arrives in Belgrade with 34-member advance party.

+ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees appeals for $27.5 million in emergency aid for Myanmar refugees fleeing to Bangladesh.

+ China tells Preparatory Committee for Earth Summit that "any attempt to impose certain political and development models" with regard to international cooperation in environmental protection was "undesirable".

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was informed early this morning of the death of former Israeli Prime Minister Menachen Begin in Tel Aviv.

In a statement through his Spokesman, the Secretary-General said Mr. Begin had played an "important role in the historic events which led to the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Sinai".

(more)

Mr. Boutros-Ghali also paid tribute to the courage and vision demonstrated by Mr. Begin in answering positively former President Sadat's peace initiative of 1977, which led to the signing the following year of the Camp David agreements. He expressed the hope that the new generation of leaders in the region would have the same courage and political determination and extended his condolences to Mr. Begin's family and the Israeli Government.

* * *

A United Nations spokesman announced today that Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz would arrive in New York tomorrow for a meeting with Security Council President Diego Arria of Venezuela. Mr. Aziz would be accompanied by the Iraqi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and by Iraq's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Abdul Amir A. Al-Anbari.

The Council President was also scheduled to meet with the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament, Rolk Ekeus, before tomorrow afternoon's consultations of the Council, and with Hans Blix, Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In related news, five allied countries in the Persian Gulf war say that despite claims to the contrary by Iraq, that country "has not yet lived up to its commitments" under the 1949 Geneva Convention and the Security Council's resolutions to provide information about detained Kuwaitis and third country nationals in Iraq. They say nearly one year has passed since all the parties to the Gulf conflict, including Iraq, agreed to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to gather such information in Iraq.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 6 March, the five Governments -- France, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and the United States -- say a recent declaration by Iraq that it was prepared to publish the names of the missing persons, is "once again an attempt by Iraq to delay fulfilling its commitments".

They remind that it was proposed already in October 1991 at a Tripartite Commission Meeting in Geneva that the Government of Iraq publish the names of the missing in the Iraqi media and the public provide any information on these persons to the ICRC. But to date, "Iraq has not published any names in any part of the media", the allied countries say.

Iraq "assumes" that it has met its obligations under the Security Council's cease-fire resolution with regard to detainees. However, the five countries say, the Iraqi compliance with its obligations under the Council resolutions should be "judged by Iraqi actions, rather than by declarations of intent".

The letter was signed by the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations of the five countries -- Jean Bernard Merimée of France, Mohammad A. Abulhasan of Kuwait, Mustafa M.H. Kawthar of Saudi Arabia, Sir David Hannay of the United Kingdom and Acting Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, Alexander F. Watson.

(more)

The Council was holding consultations this afternoon on the question of Iraqi compliance with resolution 687 (1991) that set the conditions for the cease-fire in the Gulf war. The Council is continuing consultations on the topic tomorrow, and a formal meeting of the Council has been scheduled for Wednesday, 11 March.

* * *

Under-Secretary-General James O.C. Jonah, the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to Somalia, told correspondents today that he had proposed to the Secretary-General to send an unarmed force of some 40 United Nations observers, including a military and civilian police component, to Mogadiscio to monitor the cease-fire agreement signed by the two fighting parties on 3 March.

Mr. Jonah has just returned from a joint mission to the area with officials of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The mission was part of a proposed series of visits for meetings with political and clan leaders outside Mogadiscio in preparation for a conference on national reconciliation and unity in Somalia.

Briefing correspondents on his recommendation to send observers to Somalia, Mr. Jonah said that interim President Ali Mahdi Mohamed has indicated his preference for the sending of an "intervention force" to combat anticipated fighting by element, who, he said, were "well armed with modern weapons", and who were not affiliated with either General Mohamed Farah Aideed or the interim President -- the two principal fighting parties. However, Mr. Jonah said, such a situation would require a larger force, and "attempts are being made to avoid that kind of contingency if possible".

Before the observer group could be dispatched, he said, a technical team, comprising eight to ten technical and logistical experts, including one from the three regional organizations, would review the situation in Mogadiscio and provide the Security Council with specifics on the size and costing of the proposed military observer operation.

"Somalia is still a tragedy," Mr. Jonah said, citing the "frightening situation" involving armed hungry elements who obstruct food deliveries from the port, "unless they are satisfied". He said the situation was unlike anything faced by the United Nations in the past and confirmed that there was evidence of a continuing arms trade.

The Secretary-General's report on the situation on Somalia is expected later this week and since there was "some urgency" in sending the technical mission to Mogadiscio, Mr. Jonah said, there was also the possibility of a meeting by the Security Council on the matter this week.

* * *

(more)

Lieutenant-General Satish Nambiar, Force Commander of the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR), accompanied by an advance party of 34 military, police and civilian personnel, have arrived in Belgrade, according to a report from UNPROFOR Spokesman Fred Eckhard.

The team, which arrived on Sunday, 8 March, split up today to pursue its activities, including the planning of reconnaissance missions to the area of operations by some elements, while the Force Commander and others held a series of consultations with officials.

According to Mr. Eckhard, General Nambiar today discussed practical arrangements for the UNPROFOR advance party's work in the week ahead with Borisav Jovic, the President of the State Committee with the United Nations. He also held talks with the Acting Minister of Defence and senior military officers, attended a military and political briefing and took a tour of office facilities made available for use by UNPROFOR.

Representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have also briefed the advance party. Tomorrow, General Nambiar and part of his team will travel to Zagreb, while other subgroups begin reconnaissance missions in the area of operations.

* * *

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees today appealed for $27.5 million in emergency aid for an estimated 150,000 Myanmar refugees fleeing into Bangladesh.

The Agency said in a press release issued at Headquarters that some 110,000 refugees were now gathered in 11 camps inside Bangladesh, but that thousands more were waiting along roadsides for available sites. Last week, High Commissioner Sadako Ogata released more than $3 million from her emergency fund for immediate relief efforts.

In a statement on Friday, 6 March, Secretary-General called on the international community to assist the UNHCR in helping the refugees and urged the Government of Myanmar -- formerly known as Burma -- to "rectify the causes of this tragic situation" which, he said, posed a threat to the stability of the region.

* * *

China's Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Liu Huaqiu has said that any attempt to impose certain political and economic development models or various unreasonable conditions on others in the process of exploring international cooperation in environmental protection was undesirable.

In a statement to the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development on Friday, 6 March, the Chinese Minister said the right of each country to choose its path of development and

(more)

rationally to exploit and utilize its own resources must be respected. Any interference he said, would fundamentally weaken the basis of cooperation. He proposed the setting up of a special fund to finance the environmental protection efforts of the developing countries and help them attain sustainable development. He also called for progress in negotiations on financial resources and technology transfer questions.

* *** *